

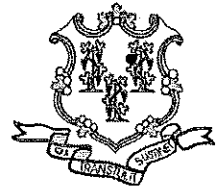


**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Public Hearing Testimony

Judiciary Committee

April 25, 2019



To: Sen. Gary Winfield, Chair
Rep. Steve Stafstrom, Chair
Sen. John Kissel, Ranking Member
Rep. Rosa Rebimbas, Ranking Member
Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Vannessa Dorantes, Commissioner
Department of Children and Families

Re: HB 7389 - An Act Concerning Confidentiality in the Case of a Discretionary
Transfer of a Juvenile's Case to the Regular Criminal Docket and Implementing
the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) offers the following comments on HB 7389, regarding the agency's association with juvenile detention facilities.

Section 6 of the bill requires DCF, the Department of Correction (DOC) and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch (CSSD) to implement best practices for juvenile detention centers and correctional facilities. The legislature transferred juvenile justice jurisdiction from the Department to the Judicial Branch in 2018, and DCF no longer manages any facility in which juvenile delinquents are detained. Therefore, we respectfully request that the Committee consider substitute language to remove DCF from this section. The Department continues to serve as the legal guardian of any child in a detention center or correctional facility who is committed to the Department for child welfare purposes.

Given the Department's previous experience with serving this population of juveniles, we would offer to consult with DOC and CSSD on these issues, but the Department cannot be responsible for implementation of practices in facilities that we do not control. Further, the reporting requirement seeks data from the facilities that DCF would not possess. The Department proposes that substitute language also remove DCF from subsection (c) of Section 6 of the bill.

Similarly, Section 9 of the bill requires that DCF, DOC and CSSD ensure that ombudsman or ombudswoman services are available at any juvenile detention center or correctional facility. Again, since DCF does not currently manage facilities of this type, we request that substitute language be considered to remove DCF from this section. If a child is receiving treatment or is housed in a facility under the purview of DCF, that child and his or her parents are able to contact the DCF Ombudsman's Office.

We are happy to work with the proponents of the bill to address these concerns. The Department thanks the Committee for consideration of this testimony.